

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 ICAE-00
PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9093
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION USNATO
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 10216

BRUSSELS, ALSO FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GW
SUBJECT: THE NATIONAL IMPACT OF THE JUNE 4 STATE
ELECTIONS IN HAMBURG AND LOWER SAXONY

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BEGIN SUMMARY: THE JUNE 4 STATE ELECTIONS HAVE CAST
MUCH CONFUSION ON THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE. THE
SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT WILL BE marginally weaker than
before, due to FDP preoccupation with its domestic
troubles in the months ahead. FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER
IN PARTICULAR MAY HAVE TO DEVOTE MORE ATTENTION THAN
EVER TO THE FORTUNES OF HIS PARTY. THE OUTCOME IS ALSO

A MIXED BLESSING FOR THE OPPOSITION CDU/CSU.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE DRAMATIC FAILURE OF THE FREE DEMOCRATIC PARTY (FDP) TO CLEAR THE FIVE-PERCENT HURDLE IN TWO MAJOR STATE (LAND) ELECTIONS ON JUNE 4 CASTS A SIGNIFICANT SHADOW OVER POLITICS IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY. THESE ELECTIONS WERE THE FIRST MAJOR TEST SINCE THE NATIONAL BUNDESTAG VOTE IN OCTOBER 1976. THEY PRODUCED MANY LOSERS AND RAISED MANY QUESTIONS. ONLY TWO CLEAR WINNERS EMERGED: HANS-ULRICH KLOSE IN HAMBURG AND ERNST ALBRECHT IN LOWER SAXONY. FRG POLITICIANS ARE STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE ELECTIONS MEAN. THE FOLLOWING IS OUR INITIAL ASSESSMENT. AMCONGEN HAMBURG IS COVERING THE CONTESTS IN MORE DETAIL.

FDP

2. THE FDP AND ITS CHAIRMAN, HANS-DIETRICH GENSCHER, HAVE LOST MORE THAN REPRESENTATION IN TWO STATE PARLIAMENTS AND A SHARE OF TWO STATE COALITIONS. LOCAL FACTORS EXPLAIN TO A GREAT DEGREE WHY THE FDP LOST IN HAMBURG AND LOWER SAXONY. HOWEVER, THE NATIONAL IMPRESSION WHICH EMERGES IS THAT THE FDP STILL HAS NEITHER A CLEAR IMAGE IN THE FRG ELECTORATE NOR A CORE OF SUPPORT WHICH CAN HOLD IT SAFELY ABOVE THE FIVE-CONFIDENTIAL

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PERCENT MARK.

3. THE FDP HAS ALWAYS SUFFERED FROM THIS PROBLEM. THE PARTY CAN ONLY GOVERN IN COALITION WITH A LARGER PARTNER, AND IT DEPENDS ON INDEPENDENT VOTES TO STAY ABOVE THE FIVE-PERCENT MARK. GENSCHER HAD HOPED TO USE THE "ELECTION-FREE YEAR", 1977, TO STRENGTHEN HIS PARTY'S APPEAL AND BASE. AS PART OF THIS EFFORT, HE ARTICULATED THE "DOUBLE STRATEGY", BY WHICH THE FDP WAS READY TO FORM COALITIONS WITH ANY MAJOR PARTY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH NEEDS OF THE MOMENT. THAT STRATEGY HAS SUFFERED A BODY BLOW FROM YESTERDAY'S VOTES IN TWO ADJACENT LAENDER WHERE THE FDP WAS IN COALITIONS WITH THE SPD AND THE CDU.

4. THE FDP HAS ALSO LOST MOST OF ITS LEVERAGE IN THE BUNDESRAT. HERETOFORE, IT HAD DEFENDED ITS COALITIONS WITH THE CDU IN LOWER SAXONY AND THE SAARLAND AS A MEANS TO WEAKEN CDU/CSU ABILITY TO EXPLOIT THE BUNDESRAT AGAINST THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT. NOW, THE OPPOSITION HAS A CLEAN, ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN THE BUNDESRAT: I.E., 23-18 VOTES, WITHOUT THE SAARLAND; OR 26-15 VOTES,

WITH THE SAARLAND. THIS DOES NOT AMOUNT TO OUTRIGHT
VETO POWER OVER THE BUNDESTAG, BUT IT GIVES THE OPPOSITION
GREATER LEVERAGE OVER MUCH GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION.

5. AT LEAST FIVE TIMES IN THE PAST, THE FDP HAS FALLEN
BELOW THE FIVE-PERCENT MARGIN. EACH TIME, IT CLEARED

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 10216

THAT HURDLE IN THE NEXT ELECTION. HOWEVER, THE JUNE 4
DEFEATS MEAN THAT THE PARTY WILL BE MORE TIED DOWN THAN

EVER IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. THE OCTOBER 8 ELECTIONS IN HESSE HAVE CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE.

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THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT

6. WE JUDGE THAT THESE ELECTIONS, BY THEIR DAMAGE TO THE FDP, HAVE marginally WEAKENED THE POSITION OF THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT.

AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS MOST UNLIKELY THAT THE FDP WILL SEEK TO DISASSOCIATE ITSELF FROM THE SPD AS A RESULT OF WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY, WHEN MOST FDP VOTES WERE LOST TO GROUPS TO THE LEFT OF THE SPD. TO THE CONTRARY, THE PARTY WILL PROBABLY CLING TO ITS REMAINING COALITIONS.

7. A VARIABLE WHOSE IMPACT WE CANNOT ASSESS IS LINGERING FDP RESENTMENT OVER SPD TACTICS IN THE TWO ELECTIONS. SEVERAL TIMES IN RECENT WEEKS, FDP LEADERS ACCUSED THE SPD OF TRYING TO DRIVE THEIR PARTY FROM THE LANDTAG IN HANNOVER AND THE BUERGERSCHAFT IN HAMBURG. NOW THAT THIS HAS OCCURRED, SPD-FDP RELATIONS MAY SUFFER NEW STRAINS.

CDU/CSU

8. THE OPPOSITION MUST VIEW THE JUNE 4 ELECTIONS WITH MIXED FEELINGS. CDU LEADER HELMUT KOHL HAD HOPED TO LURE THE FDP AWAY FROM THE SPD, USING LOWER SAXONY AS A MODEL. THAT MODEL EXISTS NOW ONLY IN THE SAARLAND, AND ITS UTILITY HAS VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED. THE LOWER SAXONY OUTCOME CAN BE TAKEN TO SUGGEST ONCE AGAIN THAT THE TIME FOR A UNION/FDP ALLIANCE IN BONN HAS NOT COME, BECAUSE OF THE HIGH RISK WHICH A CHANGE IN PARTNERS ENTAILS FOR THE FDP. AT THE SAME TIME, SOME IN THE FDP WILL REACT TO BASIC CONCERN OVER THEIR PARTY'S FUTURE BY LOOKING FOR A CHANGE IN COALITION PARTNERS--
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I.E., TO KOHL AND THE CDU.

9. CSU CHIEF FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS WILL PROBABLY INTERPRET THE OUTCOME AS ANOTHER ARGUMENT FOR THE "FOURTH PARTY"--I.E., A NATIONAL CSU, STRAUSS HAS LONG ARGUED THAT THE UNION MUST WORK FOR AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN

THE 1980 NATIONAL ELECTIONS, AND PLAN TO FORM A GOVERNMENT WITHOUT THE FDP. THE JUNE 4 RESULTS MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE CDU TO RESIST THAT ARGUMENT.

10. THE ELECTIONS HAVE STRENGTHENED CDU/CSU CONTROL OF THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY (BUNDESVERSAMMLUNG), WHICH WILL MEET IN MAY 1979 TO PICK THE NEXT FEDERAL PRESIDENT. WE JUDGE THAT THE ODDS FOR SCHEEL'S REELECTION HAVE DECREASED, AND THAT THE ODDS FOR THE ELECTION OF A UNION PRESIDENT (PROBABLY BUNDESTAG PRESIDENT KARL CARSTENS, CDU) HAVE INCREASED.

PROTEST PARTIES

11. FINALLY, PERFORMANCE OF THE "GREEN" GROUPS, ANTI-NUCLEAR CROWD, AND OTHER PROTEST PARTIES HOLDS A MESSAGE FOR ALL. IN HAMBURG AND IN LOWER SAXONY, ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES WERE MAJOR POLITICAL ITEMS. THIS IS NOT YET THE CASE IN ALL STATES, OR NATIONWIDE. WHILE THE PROTEST GROUPS--MORE THAN ANY OTHER FACTOR--PROBABLY SIPHONED OFF ENOUGH VOTES TO HOLD THE FDP BELOW THE FIVE-PERCENT BARRIER, THEY WERE UNABLE TO CROSS THAT BARRIER THEMSELVES. THEIR IMPACT ON FRG POLITICS WILL LIKELY CONTINUE TO BE AS PRESSURE GROUPS WHICH INFLUENCE OTHER PARTIES, RATHER THAN AS MEMBERS OF LEGISLATURES.

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